MARJORIE SINCLAIR

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

MARJORIE SINCLAIR

(1913 -)

Marjorie Sinclair, as Mrs. Leon Edel is known professionally, first came to Hawaii over fifty years ago as an exchange student from Mills College in California. Over the years she has become a prominent figure in academic and literary areas, first, as the wife of University of Hawaii President Dr. Gregg M. Sinclair; later, as author and professor.

The changes she has observed in Hawaii's cultural, academic, and social lives over five decades are described. She speaks with knowledge and sensitivity about the role of the university as she and Dr. Sinclair viewed it.

Marjorie Sinclair shares her stories of friendships with women of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, her love of Polynesian culture, especially language and poetry, and her concerns for the future of Hawaii.

INTERVIEW WITH MARJORIE SINCLAIR

(MRS. LEON EDEL)

At her home, 3817 Lurline Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii

April 7, 1986

S: Marjorie Sinclair

A: Alice Sinesky, Interviewer

A: I'm sure you'd like to cover a little bit about your childhood because it's always interesting and fun to go back and reminisce about some things you might not have thought about for a long time. So if you'd like to start with your family, your early schooling and, eventually, what brought you to Hawaii.

S: That's easy enough. (laughter) I was born in South Dakota, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1913 on Thanksgiving Day [November 27] and that always made it a wonderful celebration for the family. When I was about nine or ten years old, however, we left Sioux Falls and went, as many good middle westerners do, to California, to San Jose. I feel as if I grew up in San Jose and in Carmel where we had a summer home. So that I feel more like a Californian than I do like a South Dakotan, although I never forget the marshlands of South Dakota.

My father was a great hunter and I remember particularly the marsh lakes and his hunting cabin and how I really loved going there with my brother--just the two of us and father. The decoys, the ducks, the cattails.

Well, anyhow, in California--actually I'm of New England ancestry and was reminded of that continually throughout childhood. My maiden name was Putnam P-U-T-N-A-M and my father was named Israel after General Israel Putnam. My brother also got that name, but he doesn't use it. There were two names--Frank Israel. So I grew up, I suppose, a New Englander in California by way of South Dakota.

A: Did you have just the one brother? (S nods affirmatively) Was he older or younger?

S: Younger. I was the oldest child. And in California after I grew up, I went to Mills College, and there I really

met the first people whom I knew from Hawaii and one of them I remember was Tia Schaafsma--whose present married name I don't know because she's recently remarried. [Fuller] She came from a Honolulu family. Her father was a painter in the early days. Tia we called her. Her name was really Marietje, and there were others, including members of the Judd family.

After I graduated from Mills, I went on an exchange scholarship with Sophie Judd. Sophie went to Mills from the University of Hawaii and I came from Mills to the University of Hawaii in the year 1935-36. So I first came to Hawaii in 1935 as a student in the autumn, in September. And Hawaii was a totally different place then, as you might imagine.

What was it like at Waikiki? The Royal Hawaiian Hotel and the Moana and then, of course, the Halekulani farther down the beach, and that's about all. And I remember the Moana cottages across the street from the Moana nestling under the coconut palms. Very little traffic on Kalakaua Avenue. No tall buildings. People's homes scattered around. It was a beautiful, quiet, gentle place in 1935 and '36. I happened to be here when the first clipper ship came in--the Pan American clipper. I remember the great excitement about that. That great, lumbering bird of the air and the sea coming in. I saw it.

A: And started a whole new thing.

S: A whole new thing. That's right.

A: Where did you live while you were here as a student?

S: I lived at Hale Aloha which no longer exists. It was a dormitory placed on the hill where the School of Business is now--the College of Business Administration I guess they call it. It was a little wooden building, U-shaped, and each of us had our separate rooms. I've forgotten how many girls were there. The "gentlemen" on the campus called it "Chicken Inn." Of course, they had their name for it. I think all of us exchange students, that is, the girls were in Hale Aloha. The boys were in Atherton House, which was across the street and down a little.

We had a nice solid group--the people who came that year on exchange scholarships. The University of Hawaii in those days was very much devoted to the idea of exchange scholarships because they wanted the students in Hawaii to become acquainted with mainland students and in those days very, very seldom would a mainland student come to the University of Hawaii. Or even a foreign student. Although there were a few from Japan and China, not from Europe.

But the University gave us a great time. We were introduced to all of the things that one likes to do in the

Islands--the swimming, the surfing, the picnics and that kind of thing, as well as our studies. I took the opportunity, because I was the only exchange graduate student they ever had--I already had my undergraduate degree. I took advantage of the fact that there were courses in Oriental culture here and I took courses in Chinese philosophy and in Oriental poetry--Japanese, Chinese, and Indian, East Indian. So that for me it was a very exciting year. I had never been exposed to Oriental culture so totally. Not only that, but I met many Oriental people.

And because I was a graduate student, after I got here, they asked me if I would like to be a graduate assistant. I said, "Of course." You know, fifty dollars a month in those days. Now graduate assistants get in the thousands of dollars. Fifty dollars a month and I was assigned to Gregg M. Sinclair because in those days the graduate assistants were assigned to one professor. And what I did was to correct all the papers for his classes and to interview the students, too, if the students wanted interviews about their papers or their tests. Although if the student wanted to see Mr. Sinclair, of course, he could. So that's how I met my first husband. I became his (laughs) "slavey." I did all of his nitty-gritty work. And that was a very pleasant relationship.

At Christmas time the mountain erupted and I went over to the Big Island. In those days there weren't all the rules and regulations. We took sleeping bags and slept right by the side of the flow. You know, not too close because the flow moved, but it was warm and it was cold. It was up on the saddle between Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea that particular flow--the 1935 flow--December, I think it was. And it was marvelous up there, just marvelous--that cold bracing wind and the warmth from the lava and the beauty of the lava at night--that fiery glow coming down the mountain. And, of course, two or three of us university students having a great time.

A: How did you go over when you went over? Did you fly or did you take the boat?

S: We flew. And then, of course, we rented a beat-up car and went up the mountain. And, also, on that same holiday I stayed at Miss Paris' place in Kona. She was a fascinating old lady of an old island family full of stories. We used to sit out on the lanai in the evening looking over the sea at Kona and she'd tell story after story. I should have written them down. They're all gone from me now, of course, because that was a long time ago.

A: But you obviously love Kona.

S: Oh, yes. For more reasons than one. I've spent, on and off, a great deal of time in Kona, but not since the invasion of tourism. I've seen very little of it in the last ten years or so.

Well, that was really my first introduction to Hawaii. Then I went back to the mainland and got a master's degree. Gregg was eager for us to get married. Although I had originally planned to get a Ph.D., I didn't and we were married in 1939--after I'd gotten a master's degree at Mills which was my college. I came to live permanently in Hawaii in 1939--actually in this house, although the house has been changed considerably. In those days, down at the bottom of the garden there weren't houses. There were carnation fields. They were very beautiful, sweeping practically all the way down the mountain. But then the pressure for land became so great. It changed the whole tone of the neighborhood, of course.

A: Well, when you came over as a student, did you think--aside from Gregg Sinclair--"Gee, this would be a terrific place to live?" Were you homesick for California?

S: Well, I fell in love with the Islands as people do because it was so beautiful. In those days it was tranquil and beautiful. There weren't so many people; there wasn't the pressure; there wasn't the traffic. And it was quiet. I fell in love with Hawaii and thought I would like to live here someday, but I was very much career-oriented and wanted to teach in a university. That was my hope that someday I would teach literature in a university and I wanted to get a PhD. You know, the idea of marriage also was appealing and love, and that's the way it happened. I just interrupted my career--in a sense I really interrupted it because I wound up teaching, as you know.

I've never regretted living here. People have often asked me, particularly in my present life when I go so often to New York and other places--to Europe more than the Orient --they say, "How do you live out in the middle of the Pacific? It's very beautiful and a lovely place for a holiday, but how can you get any work done?" And I always say, "I can work better here than any place else I know of."

A: And we aren't that isolated when they stop and think in this day and age. Obviously forty years ago was a different story, but in this day and age we can go in any direction.

S: Well, Gregg used to say that he worked harder in Hawaii than in any place else he'd ever lived. And my present husband--he's got six desks now with a different project on each desk--with proof coming in all the time and manuscript

going out all the time and I've never known a man to work as hard as he works. It's fantastic, really fantastic. So I think it depends on the individual. If you're inclined to want to spend your time on the beach, you do. If you're geared to work, you do. And this is a lovely place to live. The climate is inviting. It's a beautiful place. And the people are certainly friendlier and warmer than in most places. It's easier to move in here and get along with people in spite of the differences in the racial groups.

This is one thing about the university that I remember. When I was a student at the university, racial groups were in some way closer together than they are now. I don't quite know how to put this because I don't want to distort anything, but I, as a student, of course, a student that a fuss was being made over because I was with a special group of exchange students. For instance, I was made an honorary member of Ke Anuenue which was the Hawaiian girls' society. I was invited to endless meetings and social gatherings--Chinese sororities, Japanese sororities. There was a Chinese Students' Alliance and a Japanese Students' Alliance in those days that I don't believe exist now--those two alliances. There was an Oriental Literature Society which met regularly. They were encouraged to do translations particularly from Chinese and Japanese. They published a little magazine. Those little magazines should be quite valuable now. And somehow there was a real intermingling of the racial groups at parties and also culturally. We were all interested in each other's culture--what kind of poems they wrote, what did they write, what did they eat and so forth. There wasn't the tendency there was during my teaching years at the university of the racial groups drawing apart a little bit.

A: Do you think that the size of the university has contributed to that?

S: I think it has. There were also more haole students proportionately in those days and many more Hawaiian students proportionately. A great many of the students at the university then were of Hawaiian origin. I think the size--what were there? about two thousand students--what are there now? twenty-six thousand. It makes a lot of difference. And in a large student population naturally you look for somebody of your own kind. It's protective. It's more comfortable.

A: Of course, that occurs not only at the university--it applies to so many places.

S: Our neighborhood here has always been remarkably interracial. My neighbors next door are of Japanese ancestry, for instance. I don't feel as close now to, let us say, the Japanese or Chinese as I did in the 1930s. Some of my closest friends were Japanese and Hawaiians in those days.

Through the years--somehow in the last decade--there has been a separation--perhaps on my part, perhaps on their part, perhaps our lives have separated us, I don't know what. Illness and death, too. When you get to be in your seventies, some of the people you've loved the best are gone. And that makes a difference.

A: Natural attrition.

S: I was particularly close to a certain group of Hawaiians in my student days and in the early days after my marriage. I treasure that very much. I'm not close to any Hawaiians particularly now. There are two or three good Hawaiian friends, but not the kind of intimacy that we had in the earlier days when I was at their house and they were at mine and dinners--no, suppers--I wouldn't even elevate it to the word "dinner"--sharing the same poi bowl so to say--dipping our fingers in the same poi bowl. And that I'm sorry has gone, because as you know I'm very much interested in the Hawaiians. I've done a certain amount of writing about them.

Well, shortly after--let's see--I was married in May, 1939 and on December 7, 1941--so you see very quickly, the war boom, boom. We were in this house on December 7. The library was built below, but there was no lanai on the top as there is now and I sat out on the roof of the library and watched the bombs and the water shooting up. Of course, we didn't really know what was happening at first. We did know that the radio told us to take cover and so forth. Then the radio went dead and it wasn't until our next door neighbors who had a short wave got the news from California that Hawaii was under attack. We, as a matter of fact, at first thought it was just practice bombing.

A: So many people thought it was just maneuvers.

S: And we were used to seeing water shoot up from practice bombing. So I just sat out there and watched, but we knew it was more than that. Particularly when they called all the doctors to go to Pearl Harbor and they called among other doctors the gynecologists, which meant they really wanted all the doctors. It sounded pretty bad. And then, of course, we were told we'd have to blackout. We blacked out that first night--you had to turn off the lights. You couldn't do anything else but turn off the lights.

Shortly after that period--I think it was in January or February--my husband became president of the university.

And so he was president of the university! But in the meantime I had gone to work for censorship. And I was in censorship for a year or two and then moved into OSS and there I had very interesting work in the Office of Strategic

Services during the war. We had Dr. Tozzer, who was a famous anthropologist from Harvard University who had Island connections--he was married to an Island woman--as our director. We were a research and analysis branch. I did all the cryptography for OSS here. I also got all of what we called the flimsies, the transcripts of Radio Tokyo in English and I would cut them up and classify them. We kept files of them. Our R and A branch also did some espionage recruiting for southeast Asia.

The real problem here was that there were people who knew Japanese or Chinese, but they all had accents that were inappropriate because the Japanese and Chinese came from families who had come twenty years ago, forty years ago, from the Orient. Languages are fluid--they change--new words come into the vocabulary so that--I couldn't do it with my ear, of course, but we had to get people who were expert enough to be able to detect the difference between the way an Island Japanese spoke Japanese and the way a Japanese Japanese spoke. Even in that period in the forties there was a distinction.

So that was my life during the war--and then, of course, I had to do what I could for the university with entertaining, but at a minimum, because there was blackout--until that was taken off.

A: And the enrollment was down approximately to a fourth of what it had been or a third.

S: I'd forgotten. But then after the war it boomed up again. That kind of detail I don't remember.

A: Well, you had all the GIs returning after the war.

S: I'm not very good at the numbers game. But then after the war was over the university really began to thrive. I had a very busy life just playing the role of president's wife because in those days the university was smaller and because my husband felt that I should be part of things, too. I did a great deal of entertaining, I did a great deal of chauffeuring. The university had a big, old clunker Buick--my husband couldn't drive so I did the driving. I drove the wives of distinguished visitors shopping and all that kind of thing.

Oh, I forgot to tell you that when I got married I spent my honeymoon at the first East-West Philosophers' Conference in 1939. My husband said, "You're going to have to spend your honeymoon at a philosophers' conference." It was fascinating. The first conference was held in 1939. I think the second one in 1949.

A: Well, it was different and I'm sure it was interesting.

S: It was fascinating. There were philosophers from Japan and, of course, from the mainland and China and India. They were all, all that I knew well, charming people. And there was a great deal of entertaining for them, too. I remember, for instance, Swami Nikhilananda from New York from the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center there--a most charming man and a handsome man, too. And, of course, before Dr. Suzuki, the great Zen Buddhist scholar, we had Dr. Takakusu who was a fascinating man. He, too, was in Buddhism. There were also other fascinating Japanese philosophers whose names, unfortunately, I forget.

Then W. T. Chan who taught here and later went to Dartmouth, I believe. He was an old friend in a sense, as old as an old friend of a few years can be. Actually, I was in his first class at the university, a class in Chinese philosophy. And he came in--I remember that first day--with a white Chinese robe on--it was a very light weight white challis, I think, and he impressed us so. He was a slight man, but somehow the long mandarin type gown gave a great dignity as he came into the room. He didn't need all the height and the curly hair and blue eyes. Oh, I'm sort of rambling around.

A: That's fine.

S: Anyhow, it was great fun at the Philosophers' Conference. I was allowed to go to all of the meetings that is, when the men all got together. Of course, they broke apart and had smaller groups during the day. My minor at college had been philosophy so I knew a little something about it and that was helpful. But it was the immersion in Chinese and Japanese and Indian philosophy that fascinated me. Of course, that was partly the original purpose of those conferences--to bring the West and the East together. And by West and East in those days we didn't mean what they mean today, politically. It meant the bringing of China, Japan, India, Southeast Asia together with European philosophers, American and British philosophers to work together, talk together, and see where they could meet and couldn't meet.

I know that my husband was terribly eager to bring Santayana [George Santayana, 1863-1952] here and once when we were in Rome we called on Santayana. However, by then he was a very old man and my husband asked him if he had as yet become interested in Eastern, in Oriental philosophy. He said, "No. I still am really a European philosopher. I just have never become interested in Oriental philosophy." But he was very sweet, a very charming man. That was when he was at the Convent of the Blue Nuns in Rome and he said to me, "Now, I'm deaf. But you don't have to shout. If you'll just look

directly at me and speak in your normal voice, I will hear you. But when you turn your voice all around, I can't hear." I think we talked actually more about literature because my husband and I were both more involved in literature than in philosophy. And he too, as you know, wrote a novel, The Last Puritan, and he wrote poems, some very interesting poems. He has published a book of poems which I have somewhere. He was more of a Renaissance man who knew a great deal about a lot of things.

Then I remember the second Philosophers' Conference which was much larger because they had junior members--what they called junior members coming to it. This made it more intense on the one hand and more giddy socially on the other. I can remember taking the philosophers around two or three times to the bon dances. They were all fascinated particularly the ones from the mainland and from Europe. They all wanted to go watch bon dances. They'd heard about them. And sometimes we'd dress them up in kimonos and get them to dance to the bong, bong, bong of the drums.

A: Do they have the bon dances?--I was thinking in terms of maybe Los Angeles or San Francisco--or is that something that's unique?--because I can't remember hearing of it even on the West Coast where you have so much of the Oriental...

S: I never heard of it on the mainland. I was never aware of it. We have in Honolulu so many temples--Japanese temples in Honolulu--Buddhist temples of different kinds and Shinto, too. But I think it's mostly at the Buddhist temples where they have the bon dances. I remember going to one on Kauai once which was really fascinating because in the country districts the dances were really the old dances. They weren't all jazzed up for the haoles. And there's a serious religious ceremonial in the temple. I'm sure there is here, too, but outsiders are not particularly invited. The sutras were chanted and people went up to put incense to burn in the metal bowls.

The Kauai trip was shortly after the war was over and the priest at the temple--I was the president's wife and he asked me if I wouldn't come over and speak to the young people at the temple, telling them that they could be good Americans and good Buddhists too. And I said, "Of course, I'd be delighted." So I spoke to them on Kauai in their temple. I think it was in Lihue, but I can't be sure. That was a long time ago. But I spoke to them on the fact that you could be a good American citizen and a good Buddhist too. You see, after the war and the uncertainties... I remember my cleaning woman at that time said that well, she was a Buddhist, but she also became a Presbyterian or whatever, because she just wanted to be sure that everything would be all right.

A: She was going to cover all bases.

S: Which I thought was very amusing. She was a wonderful lady. She was a picture bride and she married a terrible man--a drunkard and a gambler.

A: That happened to so many of those girls who came over. They didn't have any idea of what they were getting into. And most of them made the best of it. Of course, they didn't have many choices.

S: She was a character. A wonderful woman. Mrs. Yamamoto.

A: But during those years you still had time to do a certain amount of writing on your own.

S: Yes, actually you see, during the blackouts I started to write my novels. I wrote several novels; only two were published in the late forties and early fifties.

A: That was Kona and The Wild Wind.

S: Yes. I mean what could you do? You could read, you could write, you could play cards but not until we got the house fitted up with curtains which you could draw to keep the lights out. Even at that we only had the bedroom and a little back sitting room area. This part of the house was practically all windows then. Even where the books are--that portion--all windows. Imagine blacking this out. Impossible. Well, it wasn't impossible, but difficult. The bedrooms, also, had two glass walls and that was a big job--blacking it out. The little room in the back--we just painted the glass black. But just try to get it off later on.

A: Easier to go out and get a new window.

S: Yes. Actually, when I was at San Francisco--I guess I didn't tell you my first job was at the San Francisco Museum of Art before I came back to Hawaii. I worked there for about a year and a half before I came back and was married. And I started painting then. So that I was torn between painting and writing. But it was during the blackout that I decided I was going to really continue to write although I dabbled in painting and Hon-Chew Hee was my teacher. And he was and is a very fine teacher. And also I knew Isami Doi quite well and he taught me for a little while, and I knew all the painters of that particular group and saw a good deal of them so that was great fun, too.

In other words, I didn't just keep myself narrowly as the president's wife, and Gregg was very nice about this. He said, "You know, you've got to have time for yourself because we could pull you into the university and keep you busy every

minute," which they could have. And I belonged to a thousand committees and boards and heaven knows what. I could have gone to meetings all day every day. Some of them made me honorary members so I didn't feel that I had to go, but I was on the Symphony board, Child and Family Service board, YWCA, just to name a few that come back to me. Plus innumerable ones on the campus. I don't think they work the wife of the president nowadays as hard as I worked . I don't see the wives of the presidents listed on the boards that I was on. And I took it very seriously and went to these board meetings. Of course, they have children and I don't and that may have made some difference, but the children are mostly grown by the time...

A: ..they reach that level.

S: At least grown enough so they don't have to change their diapers. Gregg and I did a certain amount of travelling. Every year we went to the mainland. He had a practice of going to different universities in different parts of the country just to see the problems in other universities--state universities--pretty much state universities, but not entirely. We always went to Princeton because we were very good friends of the Doddses, and we usually went to Yale because of F. S. C. Northrup, the philosopher, who was a great friend of ours. So we had that connection there and Northrup was at the first philosophers' conference and did his The Meeting of East and West. It was a very famous book at the time it was published, a direct result of that first philosophers' conference.

But anyhow we would go and we would go to the meeting of the land grant colleges which was always fascinating, and in that way he gathered together all kinds of ideas about what other universities were doing and tried to readapt them to the University of Hawaii which was smaller and poorer than almost any of them.

A: Because we were still a territory at the time.

S: That's right. And people keep forgetting that we were a territory that whole period. I wasn't able to vote for the President of the United States until I was practically in my grave (laughter) because I was a resident of the Territory of Hawaii. We also went to Europe and then on to India because my husband--my husband had a great love for Japan and India, probably because he had lived in Japan as a young man right out of college.

A: He taught there?

S: Yes, he taught there in two different periods. He had a great many friends in Japan--multitudes of friends. And he had a great many friends in India, but mostly philosophers.

And politicians. So we had wonderful times. I found India a fascinating place to visit and wish I could have gone more often. Of course, it has its problems, too, but this isn't the place to talk about that. Japan, too, I loved. Never got to China. Only Hong Kong. (laughs)

A: Everybody I've talked to who has lived in Japan loves it.

S: Oh, my husband did--just loved it. And the people--so warm and charming. And they have a natural courtesy. It may be a formality but anyhow it certainly eases the social intercourse that goes on and eases any tensions there might be. Just this natural courtesy. Even the bowing, which may seem a little ridiculous at first but you get used to it and somehow they do it very gracefully except in the railroad stations when everybody's bottom is bumping everybody else's as they bow--okole to okole. And, of course, Japan is so beautiful physically--the landscapes in most parts of Japan are incredibly beautiful and somehow I think that's had an influence on Japanese aesthetics--on their sense of beauty and what is beautiful. India's another thing. There's lots of desert land.

And then, of course, there's always the political scene here, but I'm not a political scientist so I guess I won't talk about it. I knew a great deal about that at one time. I don't know so much about it now.

A: Well, when you reach a point where you'd like to talk about politics and the university, feel free to do so. (laughter)

S: Well, you said politics and the university. When my husband was president of the university--and that's what I'm going to talk about most. I'll talk a little bit about when I taught, too. You see, there was a much closer relationship, naturally, between the Legislature and the university. I think this was partly because Gregg made an effort to come to know the legislators. Another thing he did every year--he would go around from island to island and meet with the legislators there and talk about the problems of the university. He would go alone. He wouldn't take a whole phalanx of deans and directors and what not. He would go alone with me. However, in those meetings I would go to the beach or write a poem or paint a picture or something while the men were gathered.

But I think that made a lot of difference because what he did was to make the legislators understand, better than they could otherwise have understood, what a university is and this is one thing that Gregg had a very clear notion of --what a university is and what the destiny of the University of Hawaii could be here in the middle of the

Pacific halfway between the Orient and the Occident. He had great hopes for the university.

He had an opportunity to be territorial governor once, but turned it down because he felt that the university was more important, which is very interesting. So that we got to know the legislators--he, particularly, I didn't know them as well as he did, naturally--and we did not entertain them ever either on the outside Islands or here because he was very careful never to step over the bounds in any way. He refused to be on the governor's cabinet. He said that was not the place for the university president. The university is different from, let us say, the Board of Water Supply or the Board of Education or this or that. You must remember academic freedom. You must have the kind of freedoms that all universities have throughout the country including land grant colleges. There was great pressure for him to become a member of the governor's cabinet, but he always said, "No." He never was on it.

Another thing--the quality of the Board of Regents in those days. We had the great men--some of the great men of the state; the great lawyers, Garner Anthony, Russell Cades. All you have to do is look at the lists of men. The presidents of the great companies, the distinguished physicians. All these men would take time off to go to the meetings of the Board of Regents. And they were men, by and large, who understood--the director of the Bishop Museum was on--old Gregory [Dr. H. E. Gregory].

A: Were they appointed then as they are now?

S: Yes, they were appointed by the governor with the advice of the president of the university and the governor usually took the advice of the president of the university. Not always, because the governor's prerogative is to choose. And particulary, you see, as we had mostly Republican governors in those days. Gregg was a Democrat, but he didn't even join the Democratic party while he was president because he thought that a university should be above and beyond politics in any practical sense.

He believed that a university is a group of scholars and a group of students who come together to share learning and to discover new learning and that's what a true university is. Now the emphasis is becoming--and this is true throughout the country--it's not unique in Hawaii--more and more to make universities into sort of trade schools--professional schools--to train students to become doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs. This has always been true to a certain degree, but the background information that a student should have is very important to make him a real human being, a human human being, and not just a person. We use that word person and it's very impersonal, but we must think

of the humanizing influence of humanistic studies like philosophy, literature, language, religion, history and so forth. What do some of these professional schools do? They push humanities out because they think they have to have a little course on how to do this or how to do that early in the student's career. Gregg was very careful not to allow that to happen if he could help it. And it didn't happen often.

And believe me, the students who came to the University of Hawaii when he was president came there so they could get a better job--they were job-oriented, but they also recognized--because it was in the atmosphere--that they had to have this background before they could really focus on nursing or law. Of course, there was no law school then. Or medicine. There was no medical school but we had reciprocity with universities on the mainland. We could send our pre-med students to--I remember Tulane was one of them--I don't happen to remember any of the others. We knew the Territory couldn't afford a law school. It couldn't afford a medical school. There are some who say it still can't afford a medical school and I'm inclined to be one of them, but that's my own personal point of view.

I can remember--who was it said to us once--"You either have a medical school or you have a university. You don't have both." That may not be quite so true now, but it's pretty close to being true if you have a really good medical school. It's not so true of a law school. But if you have a really good, first-rate medical school with a teaching hospital attached to it, that's where your money goes.

Back in the thirties--you could have an organization--getting down to the humble student level--like the Oriental Literature Society where students would get excited enough to translate poems from the Chinese and Japanese and Hindi or whatever and they would get together and make sukiyaki over the hibachi once a month and exchange their translations or they would write original poems or stories. But always with the Oriental focus. You see the university in those days--some of the thoughtful professors--were horrified when they discovered that the Chinese and Japanese...

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...the Chinese and Japanese, in particular, felt so humble about themselves because their parents--in those days it would have been their parents--came from Japan as plantation laborers. What they wanted to do was inform these students who didn't really know--that China and Japan each of them has one of the great cultures of the world--so that they could be proud of being of Chinese ancestry or Japanese ancestry or Indian ancestry or whatever ancestry.

A: Right, because they couldn't get this from their parents because their parents weren't educated to realize the cultures that they had left.

S: However, the parents were literate, by and large, in their own languages. That is, they had learned in the villages to read and write Japanese or Chinese so that you didn't have that kind of illiteracy that you would have from certain European first generation immigrants. So that there was this keenness to get at the culture. And culture wasn't a naughty word and it wasn't thought to be elitist--it was thought to be part of the life of the people.

I can remember having--when I was teaching--a Japanese student, and we were studying the haiku in a poetry course; she got up one day and just began carrying on and on about the haiku in a brilliant way--the meaning of it to her and the form which is only three lines--you don't realize how complex a little form it is. And later when she came to my office I said, "How come you know so much about the haiku? Are you especially interested in poetry?" "Oh no," she said, "but my mother and I write letters to each other in haiku." I said, "Is this common?" We all know that in Japan there are haiku societies, et cetera, et cetera. But, in other words, that kind of a human activity is not so divorced as it is often in the United States. In Europe it isn't so divorced either. But the United States somehow has pulled things apart.

Well, there was this kind of humanistic quality. I think the philosophers' conferences in part grew out of that spirit and, of course, Charlie Moore and my husband and a few others really started the philosophers' conferences. Charlie, of course, was in philosophy. I think that the legislators--in those days there weren't so many Japanese legislators.... As I recall, there were a great many Portuguese, a great many haoles, a great many part-Hawaiians, some Chinese, a few Japanese. The great influx of Japanese legislators came after World War II. So I think that we have to say that Hawaii has been very fluid racially and every other way--that the balances have shifted back and forth and curled around and what was true in 1939 is totally remote from 1986. It's like centuries away in a sense.

You mentioned Kona, my novel. I've had sociologists in the last four or five years come to me and say, "You know, Kona is an important work sociologically." I was sort of astonished. I always thought of it as a novel because I give a picture in Kona of life as a part-Hawaiian which is no longer true. Part-Hawaiians don't live that kind of life very much any more, but for that particular period--the late 1930s, 1940s--it was true. And that's because I knew them and lived in with them. That helped a great deal. But I

still get fan letters for Kona and sometimes for The Wild Wind, too, because they both cover the same ground.

And Hawaiians say, "How do you know so much about Hawaiians? How can you? You're just a haole." (laughs) Well, I don't know except that I was lucky enough to come here in 1935 as a student--that's fifty years ago, fifty-one years ago come September--and to know Hawaiians at that early age intimately and to get their feelings--part-Hawaiians pretty much, not pure Hawaiians.

A: And now it's difficult--there aren't that many pure Hawaiians to talk to--but I think that it's difficult because so many of them I find are very leery--probably more so now of haoles than they were then. They accepted you then, but now there's always that hesitancy and a reticence on their part to share a lot of things with you.

S: That's right and that's one reason I don't have as many Hawaiian friends now. Also you have to realize that among the Hawaiians there's been a kind of little renaissance. When I first came to Hawaii, for instance, I knew a very large family of about thirteen children, part-Hawaiian. In that family the majority of the children looked almost like haoles. If they'd been on the mainland, you might have thought perhaps they were Mediterranean, but they didn't look terribly dark. They might have had eyes as blue as yours or as gray as mine, but there were three or four of them that were dark, and do you know that the family was ashamed of those dark colored children which were more like the Hawaiians? Because in those days they were too close to the period--I suppose the missionary period--when the Hawaiians were considered to be heathens, as the missionaries called them, to be a primitive folk. Now the Hawaiians are proud to be Hawaiians and I'm delighted that's true. One thing I regret, however, is that in being proud of being Hawaiians they separate themselves from the other racial groups and I find this to be regression on their part.

A: And it's only within--what would you say--in the last fifteen years that this...?

S: Fifteen to twenty years. Actually though this pride in the Hawaiian ancestry really is (I hope nobody's hearing me) a kind of spin off of the negro or black situation on the mainland.

A: Oh yes, there's a corollary there.

S: Yes, a very important one. I think the Hawaiians picked it up from the blacks. There was also the university and the university's interest in Hawaiian culture. And not just in an archaelogical old bones way--old stones and old bones--but in the people and the...

A: The music, the language, the dance.

S: That's right, and what they wore which is important and how they felt about things. And then you have to remember another thing about the Hawaiians, I think, and people forget this too easily--and that is that the Hawaiians had a kingdom of their own. The Hawaiians had a very high state of culture considering they had no metal, no written language and so forth. It's a very complex culture throughout Polynesia, not only the Hawaiians, but all the Polynesians. It's something I've been interested in.

A: But that's played a part in your life though.

S: It certainly has. A very important part.

A: But you were talking about the changes from 1939 on and the fact that the Republicans were in power and then the Democrats took over, the fact that after World War II the Japanese came into their own, the fact that the unions became so strong--so there have been so many changes along those lines.

S: That's right and that's made a change in the whole structure of society and the kind of lives we lead here in Hawaii. I think that probably now the Japanese-American influence in the Legislature has peaked and what's going to happen next--I'm no political scientist so I don't know--but I can guess that the next racial group to move forward in importance will be the Filipinos.

A: I was just going to say the Filipinos are moving up and to a small extent--I guess, what's his name--Mufi [Muliufi] Hanneman--is an example of the younger ones that are going to come along. It's taken them a long time.

S: Well, Fred Hemmings is part-Hawaiian, you know. It's taken them a long while, but they're coming back. In the old days there were more Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians in the Legislature. Then they slipped, but they're coming back and I think that the Legislature is going to reflect more the actual state of Hawaii itself in that there's a certain percentage of this race and a certain percentage of that race. It hasn't done that, but it's going to.

I think that the Burns regime, and I consider Ariyoshi part of the Burns regime, I think that when he's out, it's going to be pau--the influences will dwindle and dwindle. The thing about the university and the Burns regime is that Jack Burns himself was very much in favor of the university and in the early part of his "rule" if I may say (laughs)--although I was for Jack Burns and voted for him so don't misunderstand me. He was wonderful to the university and

then something happened which I don't know. I mean I can guess and I've heard rumors but this is not the place to talk about it. He began to feel not so friendly towards the university.

Then, finally, when Ariyoshi took over--I think he crippled the university by appointing very, very poor boards of regents. I think the boards of regents have been appallingly poor and why Ariyoshi allowed that to happen I don't know because Ariyoshi is an intelligent man. But I also think that Ariyoshi himself was not so much interested in the university--not nearly as interested as Jack Burns was in his early years.

Also another thing Ariyoshi did was to reach in and draw the university president into his cabinet and make the university just like any other institution or...

A: Like the Board of Water Supply.

S: Yes, like the Board as I said. And Ariyoshi should have been the first, as a trained lawyer, to understand that that is not what a university is all about. And that's what I criticize him for. Insofar as the university is concerned he has been a disaster and I would put it that way to his face.

A: Hopefully things will improve then.

S: I don't see how they can get any worse unless the university goes out of existence. And you know who's suffering?--the students. And that's what these legislators forget. Why when I was teaching, what happened? They wanted us to keep track of the hours we sat in our office. This shows an appalling misunderstanding of what a university professor is. It's like punching a time clock. You go to your office at eight o'clock in the morning. They don't know that a university professor works day and night. And it isn't always in his office. Maybe he has to go to the library or maybe he has to go to a laboratory on the other side of the Island. It's appalling, the attitude that the university is just like a business office and that the professors are the employees. This has been partly because of Ariyoshi and the legislators and partly because of the appointment of an uninformed and ignorant board of regents. And the board of regents is still not very good in my opinion. It still doesn't understand what a university is. As for the new president, we'll wait and see.

A: The handling of that whole presidency thing was such a disgrace. That was just an example of how far wrong they can go. So let's hope that Simone [Albert] can get it together.

S: That's right, that's right.

A: Would you like to talk about your teaching. I was kind of interested in--during your teaching span--the quality of students that you had especially in your field.

S: Well, I would say that--my field was poetry, and I'm not going to talk about teaching freshman composition or sophomore literature. The students--you have the whole spectrum there. But in upper division courses, in graduate courses, I would say that probably it's pretty much the same as it would be on the mainland. You have two or three students who are really marvelous and then you have the kind that are hard working people and they're eager but they don't have quite that special gift. It depends upon the human individual. I think I was fortunate to have a very nice sprinkling in every class of really talented students. The rest were good, depending in part on how they worked or on how I was able to guide them to work, because poetry is an ambiguous field in some ways. Particularly contemporary poetry and my field was twentieth century poetry.

The one thing that these eager students wanted to know was how to understand exactly--this is you see, a failure of the university really--it's a failure also of the high school.

A: I was going to say it starts before you reach the university.

S: It starts maybe down in the first grade.

A: Right. With "Twinkle, twinkle, little star."

S: That you have to say two plus two equals four. Why can't it equal five or six or seven? And this is so true in poetry where you can take, let us say, a quatrain or maybe a six line poem or a twenty line poem and it is capable of more than one interpretation. This throws them for a loop (laughs)--to be rather "slangy" about it. I had some students who would get so upset over the ambiguities that they would withdraw which means that I was not successful in showing them that there was nothing wrong with the ambiguity or that they shouldn't feel uncomfortable.

I had teachers who came back to refresh their knowledge of poetry who would weep in my office because they had been teaching for years, let us say poems by Robert Frost particularly. They had it all very carefully figured out exactly what it meant and what every word meant. Suddenly I would throw a bomb into their interpretation, you see. And because they were a bit older and not quite so casual or flexible as the younger ones they suffered.

I remember I taught the basic poetry course for teachers only on Saturday morning. They came once a week, for an hour and a half or two hours and what an experience! Never again. Because my heart was just torn for their suffering, and yet I felt I had to upset them a little bit. I couldn't let them go on and do the same things over. They had their favorite poems which they wanted me to teach them so they could go out and teach them to their students, and I would say, "No." I would never teach any poem that I knew they taught to their students. Because they were to learn principles; they were to learn imaginative rules of reaching into a poem which they could apply to any poem. It wouldn't make any difference what poem they taught. They could teach that poem.

A: Well, because, as you say, they weren't flexible or resilient, did they challenge your ideas constantly?

S: Oh yes, all the time. And, of course, I think some of them just didn't believe me. Just thought I was talking nonsense. But that never bothered me. The one thing you learn very quickly is not to be troubled by what your students think of you.

A: Or you wouldn't stay a teacher very long.

S: Unless, of course, you're trying to win all the prizes for being a good teacher which is something I was not able to do. I was rather noted, so I've been told, for being hard on my students. I don't think I was terribly hard really. But that once again shows up their own training. As you say it can go all the way back to intermediate school.

My own teaching--it was hard at first. Who was it--Scoops Casey--but she wasn't called Scoops Casey then--she was called by her Japanese name--did an article on me when I started to teach "From President's Wife to Instructor" or something like that. ["Former President's Wife Now on University Faculty" by Tomi Kaizawa] It was really very charming. Somewhere around the house I have it. And believe me, that's a hard thing to do.

A: Now what year was it that you went back to teaching?

S: Nineteen fifty-five. My husband retired at the end of June and I went back to teaching in September of 1955.

A: Did you deliberately wait until his retirement?

S: I had to. The president's wife doesn't teach. And why did I teach? Because his pension was less than an instructor's salary. In other words, they did not take care of the president when he retired. He was given nothing--no perquisites--not even an office, not even a part-time

secretary, something that's always done in most universities. Unbelievable. So I had to dig in, because most of our money had gone, too. We had no perquisites whatsoever. Every lei that we gave to a distinguished visitor came out of our pocketbook. Every dinner that we gave, came out of our pocketbook, and he wasn't paid very much. So it was tough going.

A: But aside from the financial, I mean, was it just not heard of or was there actually legislation--a nepotism type thing?

S: There were laws about that, and one wouldn't want to do it anyhow. One wouldn't do it. So you see I had to wait until I was forty-one years old to pick up my career.

A: But you had such an interesting time while you were waiting.

S: Yes, I can't complain about that. And I think in the long run the students had some benefit from that.

A: Well sure, the maturity that comes with that and the experience.

S: Well, my first couple of years were--I felt I was just one gasp ahead of the students. But it settled down and I watched how the campus changed. Also another interesting thing--when I was the president's wife, I was continually concerned about the university as a whole and how it was faring as a whole. The minute I began to be a member of a department the only thing they thought about was the English department and this was a wrench for me. I would begin to say, "But look, from the university's point of view, for the welfare of the university..." And was I smashed! (laughs) As a matter of fact, many people resented my presence in the department because they just thought that it wasn't right for me to teach. There was a misunderstanding, too. A financial misunderstanding on their part. They didn't realize I had to teach. I had to do something. And what was I trained for--teaching. Why not?

Of course, my teaching years were always a struggle. You see, I'd published-- when I entered the university as a teacher, I'd published the two novels and I had published my translation with Lily Chong, The Poems of T'ao Ch'ien and the translation with Yukuo Uyehara [A Grass Path] was just about to come out so in a sense I had more books published than almost any member of the department. There was another thing, too. I didn't have a Ph.D. Also I was a woman. But we won't go into that. (laughs) That's been gone into by too many people. I would see others go up the ladder while I stayed put.

Actually I would say that my efforts were totally devoted to teaching day and night--reading background materials, catching up in my own field--all of which was fascinating. Correcting papers, which was not so fascinating. It never is. But as you come along it gets more interesting. Teaching courses. Office hours and conferring with students. I had a tremendously heavy workload. Partly because I suppose I made it myself, doing so much reading and working so hard to give the students as much as I could. And that kept me from writing, which troubled me a bit.

I found that I couldn't teach and write too. Some people have told me that that has been true with them which means that you devote your summers as best you can to writing, although my first few summers were really devoted to research simply for my courses, because I thought I wanted to know everything I could possibly know to get caught up on all this reading I'd been missing.

A: Yes, there was a gap there that you felt you had to fill.

S: Yes, a very important gap and it had to be filled. And then I began to work again a little bit and I published the biography of Nahienaena something dear to my heart. Nahienaena has been very popular all the way along, but The Path of the Ocean a collection of Polynesian poetry is very important to me. If I had my life to start over again, I'd probably go into Polynesian poetry and I would study the languages very hard and do some translating and some work in that field because it's almost an untouched field. And it is a field that is as important, I think, in world literature as archaic Greek poetry is, and I'm not the only one to think that. There are other scholars who feel that.

A: But that wasn't published until about 1982? But you had been working on it for many, many years.

S: That's right. It took me a long time. Just gathering that material together--the amount of reading that went into it. And in obscure places. And then, of course, the problem of selection. And then I had to discard some--I didn't do the translations except for a few Hawaiian translations--because the English was so terrible. A lot of the stuff was translated by missionaries or anthropologists and they don't know the language very well, that is, from the poet's view. Yes, the content perhaps was there. I even doubted the content at some times.

As I look back, I've had an interesting life and a varied life. And of course, being married to Leon has made a great deal of difference, too. I now know how hard a real writer works. He's a workaholic--day and night and I mean

literally in the middle of the night. He'll get up at 3:00 A. M. and start working sometimes.

A: I read where you presented him with a word processor. Has that speeded things up for him?

S: You know he tried to work at that but he would get impatient. You see, he has so many deadlines because he has so many irons in the fire. He isn't like an ordinary person who is working through a novel or a book of poems or a biography and maybe a few book reviews on the side. He's had the Henry James' letters going, he's had the Edmund Wilson journals going, he's had his own books going, like the ones on the Bloomsburys and Stuff of Sleep and Dreams and the various other books that he's published--that's his own work. He is very much interested in the problem of aging and literature as you have seen and he's done a great deal of publishing and lecturing. People are continually wanting him to do more. And, of course, in psychology in literature he has been very important--he has just redone a book on that. So that he has his own work going and has two or three or four editing jobs going all the time. The editing, as you know, is very difficult work, very difficult. He has six desks--three downstairs in his study and three up here, with a separate project on each desk.

A: And uses every one of them.

S: He does. He tries to keep this one not really too cluttered--this imitation Venetian. I should say a Venetian reproduction. And also he has taught me so much about the practical side of writing and how to go about it. And right now I'm concentrating on poetry. I published a little volume, The Place Your Body Is, a couple of years ago and I'm preparing another volume now. I have not done a great deal of sending my poems out. That's partly laziness. (laughs) And also partly, you know, one does get hurt at the rejection slips that come pouring in and in all these years I haven't gotten--like Virginia Woolf--I just never got over it. Some people say they don't even read the slips. If I had a secretary who would shuffle my work together and keep sending it out for me, and then let me know when something's accepted, it would be good.

A: And not even let you see the rejection slips.

S: No, no. Keep them to herself.

A: But poetry's your first love. You did short stories, too, and novels, but poetry is...

S: Yes, short stories and novels. Recently I've done short stories and had some published. I've had poems published, of course, here and there and locally, too. In some of the

local magazines. I was just thinking this morning I've just got to take a couple of mornings out and type up some poems and send them out again. I haven't done it for six months and you know you should just keep things circulating.

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May 12, 1986

S: I was looking over what I did in the first interview and thought that one thing I'd like to talk about would be three Hawaiians whom I have known quite well. The one I knew best was Iolani Luahine, the dancer. She and I were at the University of Hawaii together. That one year that I was there she was also a student.

A: This was when you were an exchange student back in 1935.

S: That's right. She was an undergraduate and I was a graduate as I recall. She was studying at that time, at least so I remember her telling me, to be a teacher which I think was something that she did plan to be and maybe even was for a short while. But the heart of her life even then was her dancing because, as you know, she was adopted by an aunt or a greataunt--I'm not sure which--and brought up from a youngster learning the old dance patterns and motifs and beliefs. [As a young girl, she became the hanai child of her greataunt Julia Keahi Luahine]

Then after I went away from Hawaii and came back and was married I began to take hula lessons from her. I just wanted to learn the hula and it was good exercise and so I called her up and asked her. She then had a hula studio, and for quite some time--a matter of years I think--I did study the hula with her. I was the only student in the class because I asked for private lessons. And this was really wonderful. We were old friends after a fashion, and she had a person who did her chanting, an old lady who I think was related to her--now dead. We just called her Auntie Hall. She was Mrs. Hall, but we called her Auntie Hall.

And sometimes Iolani's niece, whose name at the moment I forget because she's taken a Hawaiian name [Hoakalei Kamauu] is now quite a distinguished chanter in her own right and she chants very much in the way that Iolani herself chanted. Iolani was a fine chanter as well as dancer. I studied and, of course, everything I learned was in Hawaiian. I made her translate it for me because I wanted to understand what I was doing--what the gestures meant that she was teaching to me.

I remember one time when my first husband and I went over to the Big Island, she asked me to look in certain places for the pebbles that they used that sound rather like

castanets [iiiili]. So I came home with a whole load as my husband put it of "rocks." "Here we are lugging rocks from one island to another." But they were beautiful round water-washed pebbles. I kept four for myself and gave the rest to Iolani.

A: Were there just particular areas that you could find these?

S: Well, she happened to know. I think any place where you can find that kind of pebble is suitable. There was one place near Punaluu on the Big Island--a stream there that I looked through. And I looked in places in Kona, too. That was rather fun.

All the way through with our friendship--and I knew her through her marriage. As you know, her husband had a little girl, and she really adored that child and, I think, would have liked to have kept her at the time of the divorce, but in the first place, the child belonged to the father and in the second place, the kind of life that Iolani was developing then as a great dancer would have been unsuitable for a child.

Two things struck me about her: one was her total dedication to the dance--her whole life was in it, around it and above it and below it. (laughs) The dance surrounded her so to say. And her own personal magnetism. She was not a beautiful woman really, not one of these beautiful Hawaiian girls that you see on the posters or just walking around the streets in Honolulu or anywhere in the Islands. She had great big eyes that protruded slightly and a large mouth and, as I recall, her skin was somewhat mottled. It wasn't smooth, shiny. It was brown, of course, but with a mottled effect. It was her magnetism. Whenever she entered a room, you just looked. She drew people to her in that way and that was true of her dancing, too.

Of course, she had a wonderful sense of humor. She would have made a great comic hula dancer or a great comedienne. She had a beautiful voice. Her chanting was magnificent. So this total dedication to the dance and this great personal magnetism was all part of the dance, too, in some strange way. She was a wonderful person to know. I certainly cherish my memories of her.

And then another person that I wanted to speak of was Alice Brown. Alice Brown was a part-Hawaiian and I don't know the precise facts of her family background except that her family once owned one of the great ranches in the deep valleys of Molokai. She had been reared on Molokai and somehow or other in the unhappy fashion that many Hawaiian families have, they lost the land. Hawaiians were somehow always losing their land usually in this day and age--in this

century--partly because of their lack of knowledge about contemporary American manipulation of funds and that sort of thing, which I don't know much about either.

But I knew Alice Brown from Honolulu and I also knew her when she was the--I don't know what they call it--the director of Hulihee Palace in Kona and that's when I visited her most intimately because when Gregg and I would go to Kona and he was busy I would sometimes go over and visit with Alice Brown. She was filled with stories. Mostly she was interested in the occult at the time I knew her, the appearances of Pele or the mysterious things that would happen to people because they had either advertently or inadvertently offended the gods or the old alii, the old sacred alii.

I can remember one story she told of Hulihee. Every year they had a festival at the Palace and all the Hawaiians in the neighborhood would come around and the tourists there and the haoles. A group of Hawaiian women came, and one woman was so enamored of a chicken-feather kahili that she stole it and put it in the back end of her car.

When the festival was over and they all started home in the middle of the night, she got halfway up the hill, up the road going to the mauka road, and her engine stalled. She had a car full of people--some men, some women--and the men got out and tinkered with the engine. They tried to push it to start it and it wouldn't start.

Finally the woman said, "I know what's wrong," and she took the kahili out of the back end of the car, walked back down to Kailua, returned it to Alice Brown with great apologies and said, "This must come back. It belongs to the alii. It does not belong to me." So she walked back to her car and, sure enough, it started and went up the hill. Believe it or not as you wish.

A: Oh, I do believe it. I've lived here long enough to believe it.

S: I believe it, too. And this is one thing Alice Brown said to me, "You know, the most wonderful thing about telling you these stories is that I can see by your eyes you really believe them." She said, "You know, most haoles don't."

But Alice was a very charming person and in some ways a very sad person because she felt dispossessed somehow as so many Hawaiians do today. I knew her, of course, in the thirties and forties and fifties on and off. And another person whom I knew, not so well as these two: I knew her, too, when she was the director of Hulihee Palace was Lokalia Montgomery. Lokalia was one of the great dancers of her period. In talking with her personally she had a very soft

and gentle but very rich voice. I can remember that her voice was so beautiful that sometimes I would be listening to her voice and not to what she was saying. You know, there are people who are that way.

She, too, was totally devoted to the dance. She never became as great a dancer as Iolani Luahine. She and Iolani worked together and I think they put on two or three concerts in Kailua a good many years ago. I remember visiting them one day and they were working together on choreography for a dance for an old chant or mele of some sort and they were explaining to me about the choreography of the dance. I had not realized how carefully choreographed some of these dances were--at least those two women were doing it.

I'm sure they do it now. When you think of the Merrie Monarch Festival in which they have two chants and the halaus competing. It means that each halau had its own choreography for its dance for the same chant. I really cherish the friendship of these women very, very much.

One of the things I'll never forget--going back to Alice Brown. I used to do a great deal of walking when I was in Kona and once I walked north from Kona toward Kohala side and I walked an unusual distance. I came across an old house, which had once been probably quite a decent two-story house, but it was half falling down. There were some graves in the front yard and there was a little boy, who had on a shirt of some kind and nothing else, waving at me and speaking to me. There were some adults up on the lanai. There was no road, they had no car and I thought, "My goodness, they must lead an isolated life and they must be very poor." You know, taking the typical haole point of view.

When I got back to town, I somehow mentioned them to Alice and said to her, "They must be terribly poor. How can they live?" "Oh," she said, "don't worry about them. They don't even know they're poor. They've lived that way all their lives. They're living in the Hawaiian way. They go out fishing, they have a little taro patch in their back yard." And she wasn't concerned at all. I must say the child looked very healthy. A brown creature, plump and well cared for. I'm sure there were some that were not so well cared for as there always are.

Another thing I thought I'd like to talk about was the differences between the Hawaii of "then" in the thirties and forties and the Hawaii of the eighties.

A: I know you said when you came over on your first visit it was so quiet, tranquil, peaceful--all of those things. And that certainly has changed. I think the traffic is getting worse not by the year, but by the day.

S: I do, too. I was shocked on Saturday when we went to Ward Center for something. I was appalled at the traffic. It was almost bumper to bumper all the way down. I don't know where all these cars came from. On this hill, you used to drive up and down and never encounter a car--day in and day out, week in and week out. Now they get lined up a little bit. It's fantastic. We're going to sink. (laughs)

About race relations. I talked a little bit about that at the university. I think that the divisions between the races were just as deep in those old days. I think the antagonisms were there and the angers were there and the confusions were there but people did not express them openly. So that on the surface there seemed to be a very agreeable and harmonious kind of community. I'm talking about all the Islands because I'm remembering my visits. As I told you, my husband and I went regularly to visit all the Islands every year. One very seldom encountered an abrasive statement or an unpleasant gesture of any kind.

Yet I know they were there because of my close friendship with people like Iolani Luahine and Alice Brown. And my dearest friend here was Lily Chong. She was Chinese from China. She became Lily Chong Winters. Mrs. Winters now. Also I had some Japanese friends and I know that they felt the distinctions and they used to talk to me openly about it.

I can remember Lily saying, "Oh you haole women, you're always trying to be so intellectual. Why don't you just relax and be a woman." (laughs) And yet she herself was one of the most intellectual women I've known. It just depends. She made a very interesting comparison. She said that Chinese women, she felt, (and she was talking about the educated class,) are more like European women than like American women. She said she felt perfectly at home in France, for instance, or England, but she did feel that there was a kind of quality about American women that troubled her from time to time. I thought this was an interesting connection.

You see what she's doing there is to compare women of a very ancient culture with another group of women of a very old culture--the Europeans with that sense of having lived on the European continent for millennia, just as they've lived in China for a millennia. And we really come from a new relatively raw and young land and I think that makes a distinction. Lily and I used to talk about that.

Well, getting back to the subject of race relations. The problems were there, but people were courteous and tried to be harmonious with each other and there was a pleasant layer over the whole thing. Today the divisions have moved out into the open and we have "kill haole" week in the

schools--the haole becoming the real scapegoat for almost all the racial groups. I should really say that I'm not a trained sociologist and these are highly personal and probably very feminine observations. I think the Chinese and the Japanese have moved much more closely into the haole area--ways of thinking, ways of looking at things. They're much more American--let's put it that way. As for the Polynesians and other racial groups of that sort, the old difficulties still remain. In some ways quite rightly you feel the schism, the division, more. And they themselves do.

This emerges in two ways. It emerges among the Hawaiians and the Tongans and the Samoans who are poor and underprivileged and are angry because they are poor and underprivileged, but it also comes out in a woman like Haunani Trask who is intelligent and has enough money so that she can live very comfortably. Indeed, I believe, some branches of the Trask family are indeed wealthy. In Haunani Trask and others of her kind it comes out in this angry, more intellectual and protesting way. But they fail to see how much they have also benefitted by the disprovincializing provided them by the haoles.

We have some friends on Maui who are part-Hawaiians who are also angry in that way but who live a very comfortable life. We have some haole friends who have joined them in their protests--their protests about the burning of coal and what that does to the atmosphere, the protests about the famous Makena Road on the island of Maui, et cetera. Many emotions are involved. There is a lack of clarity--their criticisms are valid but many historical things cannot be reversed. History is rarely reversible.

So I think that's the main distinction. What Marcos is doing now I'm not sure. He's creating a division, apparently, in the Filipino community, but I think also he is doing something that is much more sinister in Hawaii and that is he is dividing the Filipinos from the other racial groups in a way they had not been divided previously. That at least is my opinion.

A: I think it's unfortunate because the Filipinos just seemed to be reaching a point where they were moving up and in and now this comes along and it's going to set them back.

S: That's right. And set them back in this American community. This is what they can't forget, that it is an American community.

Then there is distinction between the university then and now. And, of course, we've already mentioned the fact that there are a great many more students. It's a great big bloated state university. And I say bloated purposely

because I do think that undoubtedly--there certainly were while I was teaching--there are a certain number of students who have no business in the university. In the first place they aren't really smart enough in the head. In the second place they're there because their parents wanted them to go and their parents are largely of Oriental ancestry and are pushing their children, which is a very natural thing and not to be criticized, but sometimes it's a little hard on the children.

The university was earlier a much more homogeneous institution. We were of all different races but we got along quite harmoniously. We had parties together, we studied together, we were interested in each other's culture. But the present university is much more professional in the sense that it has more professional schools. It has the School of Social Work, it has the Law School, the Medical School, the Nursing School. But there is now not as much humanistic study. There is not a program that allows us to get the humanities as a basis before the students move on into whatever major they're going into or whatever profession or business they're going into.

I have to pause when I say that because as you know the newspapers tell us that the university now is changing its core curricula. I don't trust that altogether because already we read in the paper that certain of the professional schools are quarrelling with the idea. All right, so they will change the core curriculum, but you just wait five years from now. It will have crept back. The more they can nibble at the studies of the humanities the more they will because they very naively, and I mean naive (and they wouldn't like that term), think that somehow it is more important for the student to have a little course in how to do it when he or she's a freshman or a sophomore or a junior perhaps--in the early years when that student shouldn't have anything but history, language, philosophy, literature and other humane subjects.

MIT learned that years ago and changed its whole curriculum. Maybe I said that before. Our university today is more professionally oriented; the students go to learn a job. They went to get a job then, too, but in a different way. The university doesn't realize nor does the board of regents, nor does the president, (although we have a new president now and we're not sure) nor did the recent presidents recognize the value, the effect of humanistic studies, of the humanities, of the liberal arts if you will.

This somehow is a very difficult area for Americans in general to understand, I think. In Europe it's just accepted. In the Orient I dare say, too, it's just accepted --their kind of humanistic studies. But the United States, you know, is always gung ho for the jobs, business and more

money. It makes a difference in the universities, too. I think the universities should prepare a young man or woman for life as well as to be a doctor, a lawyer, a merchant, chief. (laughs) Rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief, whatever.

So there is that distinction. Part of it has to do with numbers, but part of it has to do with the whole shift in the attitude of the university itself and towards the idea of a university. And incidentally, the attitude of the community towards the university was, among the haoles in particular, shocking. You'd be amazed at how many people disapproved of the University of Hawaii in the thirties. Why? Because you were educating the children of plantation laborers beyond their proper station in life. I can't tell you how many haoles I heard say that. And anybody who wants to gloss that over is just being silly or not looking clearly at what was true then. Now they wouldn't dare. And that's good. That's a great benefit. Now they don't even think of the university students as being children of Oriental immigrants. And indeed, they all aren't. They weren't then either.

Another thing that I would like to talk about is the difference in landscape and climate, then and now. We've hinted at this when we talked about the quietness and the serenity. The landscape was different. That's bound to be so. When you have development, development, development naturally you're going to have bulldozers, bulldozers, bulldozers. And you have more cement, more buildings and places that used to be beautiful hills leading out to the ocean or headlands or cliffs or gentle rolling inland places where one's eye could rest in peace, let us say, on these beautiful greens or tans and see the clouds come over are now bristling with houses, bristling with condominiums.

This is particularly true in Waikiki. If you could see photographs of the Waikiki I first knew and the Waikiki of today, I mean it's just like Wall Street down there now. I even find the smells unpleasant. The landscape of Waikiki has gone. There is no landscape except the landscape structured by human beings as they build the buildings up. The same thing is true at Kaanapali to a certain degree. When I first came to the Islands and we would drive to Lahaina and drive beyond Lahaina, we were going out into the wilderness practically. We were going through the cane fields and along beautiful empty coast line with just an occasional house nestling here and there. And there was nothing there. No hotels.

Lahaina itself was just a village. There was one hotel, the Pioneer Inn, and everybody stayed at the Pioneer Inn--cozy little place that it was. And it had a great bar. It still has a great bar, I guess. And up Kihei side on Maui--nothing there, nothing except a few houses nestling in under

the kiawe trees and occasionally a rather large house showing that somebody had some money--maybe sticking up a little bit, two stories. As I recall Maui Lu was the first hotel built there and it fit into the landscape because, as you know, the rooms were little cottages. All that has changed beyond recognition.

And Kona, when I first went to Kailua, it was a Hawaiian village. Look at Kailua today. Fantastic. The change in landscape--when you were driving on the mauka road the only thing you could see of Kailua would be the spires of the Hawaiian church sticking up and the Catholic church--those two old churches. You could see Hulihee a little bit because the garden of Hulihee and the balcony along the sea, you could see sometimes. And Kona Inn. Because Kona Inn was very old. Otherwise you couldn't see a thing because they were just simple little wooden cottages where old Hawaiians, and part-Hawaiians and a few haoles lived. I'm speaking way back in the 1930s now. And, of course, what was Keauhou? You couldn't even see Keauhou. A few little houses nestled in under the kiawe trees and a funny little wooden wharf where the canoes would come in. That whole coast was totally empty.

Iolani Luahine had a family home at Napoopoo and she just loved that place. There it was this little village along the coast. And I remember the old, old house there and a great big lawn that went right down to the sea with a few coconut palms. The house not very well kept and the salt wind blowing through it and the sound of the sea and the surf. This development does interrupt landscape and destroys landscape in beautiful places because there has been too much greediness, too much eagerness to make a lot of money quickly, as quickly as possible, without fitting things in--you can fit buildings into landscape beautifully. Look at what they do in Europe. Look at what they do in Switzerland, for instance, the greatest tourist country of them all from the beginning of time almost. What was needed was planning of an imaginative sort, to keep the high individuality of Hawaii.

Now what has that done to climate? All this cement. I dare say Honolulu, if you looked at the records, and I'm not a climatologist either, is hotter now and a lot hotter now than it was then. Why? Because there's more cement to radiate the heat. There are more roofs to gather the heat and keep it radiating. There are more interruptions to the natural flow of the trade winds or the kona winds. I don't care what kind of winds--they're all cooling. So that in Honolulu at least the climate, I think, has changed and I'm very glad I live up here on this hill.

A: You're very fortunate because the lack of trees also contributes, too.

S: You're right. The lack of foliage ...

A: takes it up about ten degrees, I swear.

S: And even up here we notice a little bit. Our neighbors have built a sort of parking lot out there which radiates heat in September and October into this living room which is now comfortably cool. It would never enter my head to have air conditioning. And more cement up and down the hill. So that the changes in landscape and climate which are a natural result I suppose of development and a necessary result as the population increases, but it didn't have to be as crudely done or as rawly done or as unthoughtfully done as it was. And that's the thing that troubles me.

I can remember Kaiser [Henry J.] you know of the Kaiser Cement Company--when I once lamented to him and this was a long time ago--in the late forties--and I said to him, "Look, isn't it terrible what's happening to Waikiki." And he the head of a cement company. But he was very much concerned about what was happening in Hawaii. I said, "What can we do about it?" He said, "It's too late for Waikiki. You start working on the outside islands right now or they're all going to look like Waikiki." That old man knew that forty years ago; he was a businesssman, and a developer, and he spoke the truth.

A: Well, I believe, he developed Hawaii Kai with a certain plan and he was determined that a lot of these things just weren't going to happen in that area and I think that they put in restrictions that are still in effect.

S: Well, the two or three times that I really talked to him actually in Gregg's office at the university that's what we always talked about. He always was interested in talking about it. I didn't bring up the subject. One time I brought it up, but he brought it up himself because he was genuinely concerned about the way in which development was going in Hawaii. He believed it could be done more intelligently.

And then another thing I'd like to mention is that all these changes make a difference in the quality of life of the human being living in the Islands. Earlier I said that Alice Brown had said of the family that I saw out on the north Kona coast all alone and isolated and so forth, not even an automobile, "But they don't know they're poor." That is a very interesting statement because in those days they had what were known as racial havens for the Hawaiians where the Hawaiians did indeed live close to the earth and they fished and they planted taro and other crops and they lived in simple little houses and they lived a life very similar to

the old life. And this was considered a good, healthy life and it was a good, healthy life. I knew a great many Hawaiians who came out of homes like that.

Now the people go in and say, "Oh, these poor people, they don't have anything." And the Hawaiians themselves have developed new desires. What does it do to them? Television. Television and the way in which it makes Americans--I'm sure all throughout the world, but Americans in particular because of the ads--in England you don't see as many ads--the advertising art makes us desire things we have absolutely no real need for. It creates desires throughout the whole Pacific.

A: It starts with children. The toy manufacturers are the worst example.

S: And what does it do? It makes people unhappy. It makes them want more than they can afford, more than they could ever afford. It makes them want to slash out at the rest of society. It makes them abrasive. I'm saying the same thing in different ways. I think it has increased the incidences of violence in the racial problems that we encounter particularly in Honolulu. I would say that the quality of life while in a way more sophisticated--more sophisticated in the sense that we have a really good symphony orchestra. In those days we had a little thumping one. We have lots of chamber music. We have good libraries, reasonably good libraries. We have opportunities for the theater and other kinds of entertainments that we didn't have before. All of these opportunities are very precious and things to be desired.

But even with all of that I think the quality of life has diminished partly because of the antagonisms and the abrasiveness and the increased traffic, the crowdedness. You know, when you begin putting a lot of people together in a small area, we all get irritated, we all want to elbow our way out. It's a very natural human desire. And the spaciousness has gone and that means that the graciousness has gone (laughs) if I may make a sort of rhyming...

A: Very nice.

S: There are still places on the other Islands where you can find this same kind of peace and tranquil life. But there's something to be said for a simple life rather than a more complex life. And what we've been eagerly pursuing in Hawaii is the more complex life and that's not necessarily the better life or the happier life. Indeed it tends to be very often the more unhappy life. I sound like an old lady sounding off (laughs) so perhaps I should sound off. Is there anything else you wanted me to talk about?

A: Well, I think that this is not only true in Hawaii as far as the crowdedness and all. What I'm thinking of is one of Shirley MacLaine's books where she went back to Tokyo after an absence of several years and she said she had to go so far out of Tokyo to find the country. I think it isn't just the Hawaiian problem. It's the population problem and we feel it here to a worse degree than other places.

S: Because we're an island. But I do think that the most dramatic thing that has happened has been this frightening increase of population in Hawaii which continues and I think that the government and the people of Hawaii--they can't leave it to the government alone--have to give very serious consideration as to where we're going and how we're going to go. We can't keep people out, but what are we going to do about keeping up the quality of life here?

A: Well, in talking to people in different fields I keep hearing about tourism and the military. And the feeling is that tourism is going to keep growing and growing and we should learn how to handle it in a better educated manner. We just seem to be stuck with it right now.

S: I think we are; however, we should also remember that the first great economic development in Hawaii, if I am correct, was the whaling industry and that made a great deal of difference in the kind of life that people lived. The whaling industry is now extinct. The second has been the sugar and pineapple and they are on their way out though they're not ready to admit it yet. But there's just no doubt of it. Now we have tourism. I think that, fortunately or unfortunately, Hawaii is a natural for tourism because it's beautiful, it has an amiable climate and people like to come here for those reasons and other reasons, too.

Tourism can be handled. I just wish that people in Hawaii would study how Switzerland, for instance, places in Italy, places in England, places in France--I'm thinking of places I know--how they have handled tourism and kept it still gracious and delightful and not imposed little New Yorks dotted here and there throughout the islands. Little New Yorks with all of the social problems of little New Yorks or little Chicagos or whatever. What they are doing is to plant little cities and cities have their own kinds of problems and they're not pleasant.

A: Well, they must have learned from Waikiki. I can't imagine them letting that happen again.

S: Well, I find the Kaanapali area of Maui so unpleasant that I don't want to go there. Too many buildings, too many people. When I think of those glorious days on those beaches when you didn't see a soul--not that I think that's the ideal situation either, but there would have been ways of handling

that. And I don't know--I haven't been in Kona for a while--but the last time I was there I was very uneasy. I was not happy, so much so that I've never been back. I would go to Kohala and on Maui I'd like to go to Hana again.

I spent some time in Hana and it certainly was a beautiful place and when you think of--I don't think Hana's been spoiled.

A: It's been too hard to get into.

S: That's right and I hope they never change that road. It helps to have a really terrible road. It is incredibly beautiful, incredibly beautiful to have that kind of landscape. And even as you go around Kaupo, around the mountain, as it becomes more desert...

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 1

S: If they begin to dot that great Kaupo slope with houses and condominiums, that beautiful sweep down from Kaupo gap is gone forever. Now they can arrange by careful planning. Also another thing about the way in which tourism has developed here is the total lack of concern for the shape of the land and the creatures that live in the land--the smaller creatures, the insects, the little fish, the small plants and so forth.

I'm not an ardent conservationist, but I am modestly ardent and I see no reason why when with a little careful planning you can still retain the natural habitat of these creatures. As Tristam Shandy said, "Little fly, there's room in the world for thee and me." (laughs)

A: Primarily it's a matter of good planning and education.

S: And that's where the humanities come in. It's because these men and women who are planning these developments do not know enough about the history of man, about the philosophy of man, about art, about literature which gives you more about the feelings of man than the cold opportunism of business.

That's one thing that my present husband has been very much concerned with--psychology in literature, and you learn certain kinds of psychology from literature that the psychologists simply cannot handle as well. A good psychologist himself or herself will admit this. As a matter of fact, they come to Leon.

So that instead of rushing to do this, do it more slowly and with more careful planning and with consideration of the whole environment--the human environment and the natural environment--because humanity is part of the natural

environment. We are rapidly destroying our natural environment and that's the great tragedy of the late twentieth century, I think.

When one thinks of what happened in Russia and the nuclear problems. It could happen right here and it has happened in the United States and will go on happening in the United States. They've been so eager to harness the power for good and bad that they've not thought that they have a terrible, terrible thing in their hands that can destroy the whole planet. Some people say it, but they've not really thought or felt--that's where literature can help--it can make you feel it.

I certainly hope that the future of Hawaii will be in the hands of men and women wise enough to recognize that the whole environment of Hawaii must be preserved, including the ocean. The Polynesians knew how precious the islands were. Every little place had its name and the name was attached to some physical beauty or elegance there or to an old story of a god or a goddess or a human being--some little something--so that every thing was attached to human experience. At the same time it was not demolished in the name of human experience, and there we could learn from the Hawaiians. I guess I haven't much more to say.

END OF TAPE 2/SIDE 2

SUBJECT INDEX

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Watumull Foundation Oral History Project began in June of 1971. During the following seventeen months eighty-eight people were taped. These tapes were transcribed but had not been put in final form when the project was suspended at the end of 1972.

In 1979 the project was reactivated and the long process of proofing, final typing and binding began. On the fortieth anniversary of the Watumull Foundation in 1982 the completed histories were delivered to the three repositories.

As the value of these interviews was realized, it was decided to add to the collection. In November of 1985 Alice Sinesky was engaged to interview and edit thirty-three histories that have been recorded to mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the Foundation.

The subjects for the interviews are chosen from all walks of life and are people who are part of and have contributed to the history of Hawaii.

The final transcripts, on acid-free Permalife bond paper and individually Velo-bound, are deposited and are available to scholars and historians at the Hawaii State Archives, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii and the Cooke Library at Punahou School. The tapes are sealed and are not available.

August 1987